

THE LIFE OF JIGTEN SUMGÖN PART 2 – Power of Bodhicitta

After his guru Phagmodrupa had passed away, Jigten Sumgön concentrated intensely on meditation while he stayed in a cave called Echung Cave.

One day when his eyes were hurting from an infection, the king of the nagas, the snake spirits, came and licked his eyes, which healed them. After three years meditating in the cave, he traveled back to Phagmodrupa's monastery, and then returned to Echung Cave and meditated for another two years.



While in the cave, he became ill with leprosy, a terrible and frightening skin disease that causes big sores on the body. Doctors couldn't cure it in those days. He got the illness because of negative karmas from past lives. He didn't want to leave the cave, because he didn't want other people to catch leprosy from him. He thought that maybe he should just die, because he felt useless. He wouldn't be able to teach with leprosy. People would never want to come near him with such a terrible disease.

But he didn't want people to think that he was hiding his disease. So, he went to the home of one of his devotees, stood at the door, and announced, "I have suddenly become ill with a disease," and then quickly left and went back to the cave.



He did many prostrations, bowing with devotion, fully stretched out on the ground, in front of a picture of Chenrezig, the Lord of Compassion, that had been blessed many times by his Lama, Phagmodrupa.

Sometimes he felt intense depression. Leprosy is a serious illness. The fingers and toes become numb, so they get injured and so infected that they even fall off. It sometimes leads to blindness. Then he remembered the suffering of beings in all the six realms – the animals always afraid of being attacked, hungry ghosts never getting enough food, beings in the hell-worlds being tortured, humans having all kinds of

worries, grief and pain, and even heavenly beings feeling terrible when they have to leave their heaven world and go into a lower world. So many beings that didn't yet learn the Dharma, and so are unable to end their suffering, and have to go through more suffering, again and again, in their future lives. He felt so much compassion for all those beings that tears flowed from his eyes. He said prayers every day wishing to become the protector, help and refuge of all beings.

During that time, he noticed that when he meditated, his sickness seemed to flow out from his legs like dust being carried away by a strong wind, and when he stopped meditating, the sickness seemed to remain within him. He continued meditating on compassion for all beings, wishing to protect them from suffering and lead them to the real happiness of enlightenment.

One day in the middle of winter, there was mighty thunder and rain, and Jigten Sumgön felt a change in his body. That evening, he fully recovered, like the sun coming out of the darkness, and he was full of joy. He couldn't believe it – he had cured his leprosy by his meditation and prayers of compassion for all beings!

He wanted to test whether leprosy really could be cured by prayer and blessings. So, he traveled around until he found another man who had leprosy, and then gave him Dharma teachings. Within 15 days, the man was fully cured from that terrible disease! Now, to serve his Lama Phagmodrupa and the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha (the Buddhist monks and practitioners), Jigten Sumgön was determined to help others constantly.

When he went back to Phagmodru, the monastery of his guru, a lama requested him to perform a ceremony to remember the passing away of Phagmodrupa. Jigten Sumgön told him,

“I made a promise to do meditation practice, not perform ceremonies. So for now I must simply meditate.”

But the lama insisted that he perform the ceremony, and collected many offerings for it, including meat and alcohol. The ceremony began, and a young woman started dancing. Jigten Sumgön felt this was wrong, and thought,

“Is it virtuous for me to perform this ceremony or not? Maybe this meat, alcohol and dancing is happening because I am not a monk. In order to best help all beings, I must become a monk. Plus, I would be fulfilling the wish of Lord Phagmodrupa by becoming a monk.”

Indeed, his guru had asked him to become a monk years before, but Jigten Sumgön had decided not to. But now, he wanted to be a monk. And from that time onward, like his guru, he stopped eating meat and became a vegetarian.

He was 35 years old when he was ordained as a monk. Soon after that, several famous lamas came to visit him. Each of them felt such deep love and devotion when they spoke with him, that one of the lamas asked another what he thought of Jigten Sumgön, and the other lama replied, “He is indeed like a Buddha.”

Soon Jigten Sumgön became well-known. The monks at Phagmodru Monastery admired him so much that they said to him, "This entire monastery is offered to you."

But he didn't stay there. Some lamas mentioned a place called Drikung, and immediately when he heard that name, he thought, "I must go there."



On his journey, there was a place where there were some deer and antelope.

He gave meditation instructions to them, and soon the deer and antelope were meditating!

The men traveling with him were amazed, and told others about it. The news traveled, and he became famous not only for healing illnesses, but also for teaching animals to meditate.

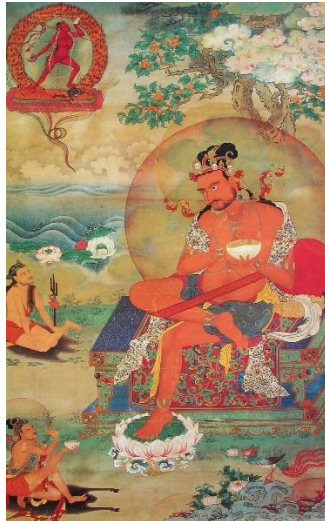
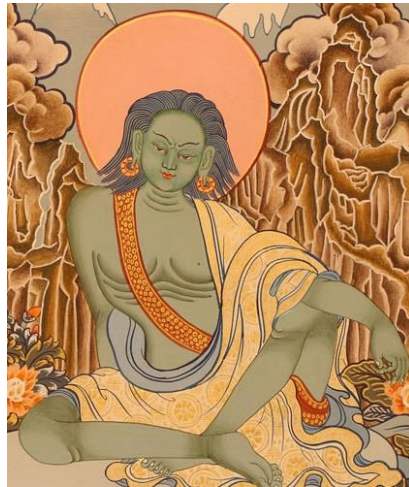
When he and his traveling companions arrived in Drikung, the people of the area welcomed him. Soon he had more than 100 monks around him, eager to hear his teachings, although he really only intended to go there to meditate.

People noticed that when Jigten Sumgön sat on his throne, a rainbow appeared above him. Everyone who gathered around him felt strong devotion, blissfully happy. Many people noticed that their illnesses were cured when they visited him. And, something very peculiar was happening - although the winter days were short, when the sun rises later and sets earlier, the sun was always shining as long as he was sitting on the throne, and only set after he left the throne. He seemed to have the power to make the sun shine longer!

Not only people came to visit him, but many non-human beings came too. As he went on a journey, some of his companions who had special powers saw that for a whole day, a long line non-humans came to welcome him. There were spirits of all kinds - some were as large as mountains, some seemed as long as a river, and one opened up a huge umbrella. Each of them walked in a circle around him as an expression of devotion, not in the clockwise direction that humans do, but in the opposite direction, as non-humans do. Then they disappeared.

Jigten Sumgön later had a vision of the monk Ananda, who was the attendant of Shakyamuni Buddha. In his vision, Ananda seemed as tall as a three-story building! He taught Jigten Sumgön all of Shakyamuni Buddha's teachings.

He also had visions of Phagmodrupa's guru Gampopa, and Gampopa's guru Milarepa, and Milarepa's guru Marpa, and even Marpa's guru Naropa and Naropa's guru Tilopa – all the lamas of the Kagyu lineage. During these visions, he could talk with them about the teachings.



One day he received a request to help stop a war that had been going on between two groups of people for a long time. They were desperate to find a solution, but all attempts to reach an agreement had failed.

When he went to visit the warring groups, he tried to help them solve their disagreement so they could live peacefully again, but it wasn't easy. So, he blessed them with his great lovingkindness and compassion. And that blessing alone caused them to stop fighting!



He went to visit the monastery of Gampopa, the guru of his Lama Phagmodrupa. The monks there were so honored by his visit that they offered the whole monastery to him. But instead, he stayed in a cave there to meditate. As he gazed at a painting of Gampopa, he saw a radiant light coming from Gampopa's forehead in the painting.

When he returned to Drikung, there were 7,000 monks there to receive teachings from him. The areas around Drikung were filled with people wishing to learn from him. But he saw signs that a very negative event was going to happen. He told some of the monks there about it, and that he planned to go into a long meditation retreat for 12 years, because the event would be so dangerous that it may take a long time to get rid of the obstacles that were causing it.

So, he started the silent retreat. But after five months, he came out and announced to the monks, "All the negative signs have been reversed." The monks were happy that he could be with them again.

That wasn't the end of meditation retreats. When the monks were gathered together, he said, "Either you will make a retreat in the mountains or I will." All the monks agreed to do a silent meditation retreat alone in a cave, so he could continue teaching other students.



One day, he behaved in an unusual way. With a monk's bowl in one hand and a trident (a three-pronged weapon that looks like a pitchfork), he walked away from the monastery, saying some strange words. And at the very same time he was walking around Drikung, some people saw him as a white-skinned monk with a bowl and trident, hundreds of miles away in Bodhagaya, India – the place where Shakyamuni Buddha was enlightened. His body appeared in both places – Drikung and Bodhagaya - at the same time!

One of the people in Bodhagaya asked, "Who are you?" and he answered, "I am from Drikung."

They asked, "Where are you going?" He replied, "I am going to conquer the army of Garlog."

They asked, “How are you going to do that?” He said, “I will conquer them with the power of lovingkindness. Through that meditation the place will be suddenly overcome with peace.”

And indeed, he did as he said he would do. Because of his powerful meditation on lovingkindness, compassion and Bodhicitta, the ferocious army that was going to invade Bodhgaya was feeling too peaceful to do anything violent. Their plan to invade was forgotten.

Jigten Sumgön taught all his students to focus on Bodhicitta, and that it’s the best service one can do for their Lama. He personally took care of all the monks, even the young ones who had to endure hardship, like sleeping on the dusty hard floor, as they learned discipline. He treated them as if they were his own sons, and looked at them with great love as if they were his guru Phagmodrupa. He was pleased even by the small things that his students did well. He never considered anyone as not good enough. He didn’t just follow what other lamas did, but instead he concentrated on the most important things to help beings be free from suffering.

Jigten Sumgön gave teachings for 40 years. When his was more than 70 years old, he had 180,000 students gathered in Drikung. He sent many of them to do meditation retreats in the three holiest places - Lapchi, the area where Milarepa was; Mount Kailash, the very famous mountain holy to both Hindus and Buddhists; and Tsari, in the southern Himalaya mountains of Tibet near India. In addition, he had many non-human students. Many of his students, human and non-human, became enlightened.



(photos of Lapchi, Kailash and Tsari)

When Jigten Sumgön passed away at age 75, he was sitting in meditation position looking up, and many people saw flowers raining down and rainbows appearing in the sky at that moment.



One of his greatest students, named Gar Chödingpa, after passing away, came back to be born on Earth in his next lives again and again to practice and teach Dharma to help other beings.

Now, in his present life he is known as the eighth Garchen Rinpoche.

Another of his greatest students, who was his nephew, became the next holder of the Drikung Kagyu lineage, meaning that he received the blessings and all the teachings from Jigten Sumgön, and sat on Jigten Sumgön's throne as the next leader of the Drikung Monastery. He passed on the blessings, lineage and teachings to a relative who was his student, who passed them on to a relative who was his student, and so on, 17 more times, until they were passed on to two students who were brothers - one called the first Chetsang Rinpoche who was born in the year 1590, and one called the first Chungtsang Rinpoche, born five years later.



These two brothers each came back several times after passing away, to be born on Earth again and carry on the Drikung Kagyu lineage. They are alive today as the seventh Chetsang Rinpoche and seventh Chungtsang Rinpoche.

We are so very fortunate to have the teachings of Jigten Sumgön available to us today because of these great beings, who were his students, coming back life after life to teach us!

QUESTIONS:

1. What is the name of the Lord of Compassion, to whom Jigten Sumgön bowed when he had the disease of leprosy? (Chenrezig)
2. When he was depressed, what beings did he think about? (the beings suffering in the 6 realms – animals, hungry ghosts, humans, beings in hell-worlds and in heaven worlds)
3. How did he cure his disease? (by meditation and prayer of compassion for all beings)
4. How did he stop the war between the two groups of people? (by his blessings of lovingkindness and compassion)
5. How did he stop the army from invading Bodhgaya, the place where Shakyamuni Buddha was enlightened? (his powerful meditation on lovingkindness)
6. What did he tell his students to focus on the most? (Bodhicitta)

DHARMA DISCUSSION – Power of Bodhicitta

“I will conquer them with the power of great loving kindness. Through that meditation the place will be suddenly overcome with peace.” (Jigten Sumgön, The Great Kagyu Masters p. 252)

“May my mindstream be moistened by lovingkindness, compassion and Bodhicitta, and through that, may I become a spiritual master with good qualities equal to the infinity of space.” (Jigten Sumgön, Dedication Prayer by Lord Jigten Sumgön)

“Giving rise to the bodhicitta of aspiring and engaging at the start, I won’t practice the Dharma for only my benefit.” (Milarepa, 100,000 Songs, p. 546)

“If you have great bodhicitta, excellence comes.” (Milarepa, 100,000 Songs, p. 451)

“Toward all sentient beings without realization, continuous compassion and love are important.” (Milarepa, 100,000 Songs, p. 555)

As Jigten Sumgön taught, Bodhicitta is the most important practice. What is Bodhicitta? Bodhicitta means wishing that all beings be peaceful and happy, that they not suffer, and that you and all beings soon become enlightened. It means wishing you become enlightened so you can help other beings become enlightened. The way to develop Bodhicitta is to increase our lovingkindness and compassion. We may feel lovingkindness and compassion sometimes, but how do we increase it? Jigten Sumgön meditated on compassion and lovingkindness. And he acted with lovingkindness to those around him, including the monks and his students.

He also did compassionate deeds, helping, healing and teaching others to relieve them from all kinds of suffering.

Similarly, we can do meditations on lovingkindness and compassion.

And we can find ways to be helpful to our parents, teachers and others around us.

Just remembering to be helpful and considerate of others, remembering not to annoy others, and having an awareness of how we could be of help to others around us, is a great way to practice.

Why do we not always remember these things? Why are we not more aware of how we can help? We so often forget.

When we're with a friend, we only think about the friend and don't notice someone else around us who might be feeling left out, uncomfortable, or shy.

This is because we're focused on wanting to have fun with friends, toys, entertainment, or we're focused on other things that we want. In other words, we're focused on our desires.

Or we're focused on our own discomfort or disappointment.

So we aren't aware of how others around us might be uncomfortable or might need our help.

The more we understand and practice Dharma, the more aware we are.

For example, we can find more ways to help when we have more awareness of what is going on all around us, and less focus on trying to get what we want.

Another way to increase lovingkindness and compassion is to practice having lovingkindness and compassion for people who are unkind to you, who have hurt you, or who hate you.

Remember, people only are hurtful and unkind when they themselves are hurting inside.

If they were happy and free from suffering, then they wouldn't hate you or hurt you anymore.

So, wish that they be happy and free from suffering!

You don't have to be their friend, but at least you won't hate them.

As Jigten Sumgön says, conquer them with the power of lovingkindness!

ACTIVITIES:

1. Students sit in a circle. One student sits in the middle of the circle while the others practice having thoughts of Bodhicitta, lovingkindness and compassion for the one sitting in the middle. Each student takes a turn sitting in the middle. Finally, the middle of the circle is empty but students visualize others sitting in the middle – family members; people who are suffering in hospitals, war zones, and prisons; an enemy or someone who has hurt them or who they don't like.

Encourage their thoughts with words like "In some ways he is just like me. He wants to be safe, comfortable, peaceful and happy. May he be safe, comfortable, peaceful and happy. May he have the true Dharmic causes of happiness, and may he be free from suffering."

2. Chant the long-life prayers, and the Mantra of White Tara, for His Holiness the Dalai Lama, His Holiness Chetsang Rinpoche, and His Eminence Garchen Rinpoche.

LONG LIFE PRAYERS

Prayer for long life of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama:

GANG RI RA WEY KOR WEY ZHING KHAM SU, PHEN DANG DE WA MA LÜ JUNG WEY NE,

CHEN-RE-ZIG WANG TENZIN GYAM-TSO YI, ZHAB PE SI TE BAR DU TEN GYUR CHIG

For this world circled by snow mountains, you are the source of all benefit and happiness without exception. Tenzin Gyatso, powerful Chenrezig, may you remain strong until the end of samsara!

Prayer for long life of His Holiness Chetsang Rinpoche:

KÖN CHOG SUM DÜ SHAKYA SENGE YI, TEN PA DZIN CHING PEL WEY DAG NYI CHE,

KÜN ZANG CHÖ PA DRO DÖN TRIN LE CHOG, LHÜN DRUB JE-TSÜN LA MEY ZHAB TEN SÖL

You are the human form of the Three Jewels (the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha). You, a great being, are the one who holds and spreads the teachings of the Shakyamuni Buddha who is great like a lion. Your supreme enlightened activities guide beings to have excellent conduct always. May you, precious, guru who immediately accomplishes all good things, live long!

Prayer for long life of His Eminence Garchen Rinpoche:

PHAG PEY YÜL NA ARYA DE WA ZHE, DO KHAM CHOG SU GAR GYI RIG SU TRÜL,

JIG-TEN GÖN-PO THUG SE CHÖ-DING-PA, PAL DEN GAR-CHEN KU TSE KAL GYAR TEN

The one known in the Noble Land as Aryadeva who took birth into the Gar clan of Eastern Tibet as Chödingpa, the heart son of Jigten Sumgön, may the life of glorious Garchen remain strong for a hundred eons!

Mantra of White Tara:

OM TARE TU TARE TURE MAMA AYUR GYANA PUNYE PUSHTIM KURU SOHA